

5 The Power to Determine Importance

“Determining important ideas and information in text is central to making sense of reading and moving towards insight... Simply put, readers of nonfiction have to decide and remember what is important in the texts they read if they are going to learn anything from them.”—Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (2000: 118)

In my search for ways to help students determine importance, I have come across numerous strategies, far too many to include in this book. Being in classrooms and trying these lessons with students has enabled me to find a few that have worked well. These strategies come from different sources and, while I may have adapted and tweaked them, I have made every attempt to credit the original source.

In our technology-driven world, children are inundated with information—on television, on the Internet, in magazines, and in movie theatres. And while they may be developing strategies to process and sift through the flashy advertisements better than adults, how effectively is this being transferred to the printed page of a real text? In fact, having so much information at their fingertips, children now, more than ever, need to be able to learn to be selective and know where to go to determine what is important. Downloading pages and pages of information for a research project does nothing, if you are not able to determine what’s most important.

I made a lot of “connections” to Stephanie Harvey’s description of her old university text books, and the pages and pages of highlighted text (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007: 117). Mine look very similar and, although very colorful, clearly reflect my lack of understanding of where to locate important information in a text—how to “get the gist” of a piece. And while the lack of instruction I received in determining main ideas created challenges for me as a reader, it has also motivated me to introduce my students to a variety of strategies so that they can learn to sift through the details, and be able to summarize the main idea. Some of these strategies work better for certain types of readers than others. I believe that it is, therefore, important to introduce readers to a variety of ways of locating main ideas and to allow students to choose the one or ones that work best for them. As with any strategy I teach, the more opportunities the students have to practice the strategies with texts at or below their reading level, the better the chances are that they will apply the strategy when reading independently.

One of my goals was to try to find generic strategies, ones that are not specifically tied to particular text. Most of the lessons here will work with any short piece of text, and it is my recommendation that you use this opportunity to find books that are connected to your social studies and science content areas.

Determining Importance is one of the most important strategies students will learn when reading nonfiction texts. Without the ability to determine what the text is about, there is little or no chance that a student will be able to move forward into interactive and insightful levels of comprehension. Introducing students to different ways to find the main idea, modeling and guiding them through the lessons, and providing opportunities for independent practice with texts at their level will encourage success.

A Note on Text Structure

The concept of text structure, although not new, has been hovering in the back corners of my thinking for the past several years. Until recently, however, I had not considered it to be of particular importance to the reading and under-

“Expository text structure awareness is an awareness of the structure the writer has used to put together the text. We strongly believe that students need to be taught how to pay attention to text organization and structure, particularly exposition.”—Sue Dymock and Tom Nicholson (2007)

As with all the strategies, practicing with texts at or below reading level will promote success.

standing of nonfiction, and it took a backseat to some of the other strategies I considered to be more relevant. It is now becoming more and more evident that to help students determine what is important in nonfiction texts we must give them, at the very least, an introduction to the concept of text structures so that they can begin to recognize the differences in how information is presented.

I was first introduced to the concept of text structures by Tony Stead’s *Is That A Fact?* More recently, in their book *Teaching Text Structures: A Key to Nonfiction Reading Success*, Sue Dymock and Tom Nicholson discuss the importance of teaching the different text structures to students in order to enhance their comprehension of nonfiction text. “Readers who understand the many expository text structures, and who use this knowledge as they read, will remember more of the important information in the text” (Dymock & Nicholson 2007: 26). Based on the work of Bonnie Meyer, one of the first researchers to classify nonfiction by different design structures, Dymock and Nicholson’s model recommends first introducing the concept of text structures, and then presenting four or five simple structures for nonfiction that students can learn to identify. The text that most students begin to encounter at an elementary school level are descriptive and sequential.

Key Concepts of Text Structure

- Any piece of written text has a text structure.
- A text structure is a way that a piece of writing is organized.
- Fiction (stories, narrative text) has only one text structure: Setting, Characters, Plot; Problem, Solution; Beginning–Middle–End.
- Nonfiction (information, expository text) has several text structures:
 - Descriptive
 - Sequential
 - Compare and Contrast
 - Cause and Effect
 - Problem/Solution
- Paying attention to the structure of a text can help readers locate the important information.

Introducing the Power to Determine Importance

Before launching into a series of strategy lessons, it is important for me to explain to the students the concept: what we are learning and why we need to learn it. Tanny McGregor (2007: 78–80) describes her Purse lesson, in which she pulls out the contents of her purse and lays them on a table in front of her students. Items range from her cell phone and keys to a package of gum and a coupon. She then tells her students that she is going to be jogging around the track after school and doesn’t want to take her purse; she wants to carry with her only what is important and leave the rest of the things in her purse. The students have to discuss in partners which items she should take and which she should leave and why. This wonderful and effective concrete example puts a reading strategy into a real-life situation so that students can experience it in its simplest form.

For this lesson you will need:

- Nonfiction Reading Powers model (page 29)
- blank chart paper, overhead transparency, or SMART board for modeling

Each student will need

- a piece of scrap paper to write a list

- Begin the lesson:

I'm sure many of you have noticed that, when you read nonfiction books—books on a particular topic or subject, for example—there is often a lot of information presented to you. Some of the information is important; some of it may be interesting details that have been added. Active readers are able to sort out all the information and figure out what really is important. What can be difficult, at times, is trying to figure out what the most important information is and where to find it. The next Reading Power that we are going to be learning is called “Determining Importance.”

(Place Determining Importance puzzle piece in head of Nonfiction Reading Powers model.)

I'm going to help you learn different ways to try to figure out and locate the most important parts of nonfiction texts. You will most likely find some ways easier than others, and hopefully you will find one that will work for you.

To get us started, I thought we'd play a little game to get our minds thinking about determining importance. I would like you to imagine that you have been given an opportunity to spend one year alone on a deserted island. If you manage to survive for a year on this island, you will receive a great fortune. You are only allowed to bring with you 15 items. On a scrap piece of paper, I would like you to make a list of the 15 items you would take. Think carefully, now; this island has nothing and you need to survive alone for one year.

Convincing your partner that you have made the right choices becomes part of the challenge. The decision-making and deep discussions that occur during this lesson is worth the time it takes.

- Students write their own lists of 15 items.
- Have students share and compare their lists in partners. Encourage trading or switching list items during sharing time.
- Model and share your own list with the class.
- Tell students that they now need to cut out five items to make a list of ten.
- Model and think aloud as you cut items from your list, justifying why they may not be as important as other items.
- Invite students to cross out five items and then to share their revised lists with a partner.

To survive on an island, I would bring...

backpack	pajamas	pencil	tarp
water bottle	fishing rod	notebook	sleeping bag

- Repeat the process several more times, until the students are told that they are allowed only three items.
- End the lesson:

Well done, everyone. You all did an excellent job of determining importance—of finding the main items that would help you to survive. But you were also using a very important thinking strategy that active readers use: determining importance. You did it by thinking, by discussing, and by choosing what you felt was most important for your survival. And while everyone's list is not exactly the same, I'm

convinced that none of you ended up with trivial, unimportant items; I know that all the items were very carefully chosen and justified. This is something we need to always keep in mind when we are reading—finding the main idea is not about getting the answer right, it’s about thinking through the text to figure out what you want to take away from it. It’s about deciding what information you think should be left behind and what information should be “brought to the island.”

Books for Determining Importance

Nicola Davies, <i>Extreme Animals</i> (I)	Text on Two Levels series (includes <i>Energy</i> ; <i>Geography</i> ;
Nicola Davies, <i>Poo</i> (I)	<i>Solar Power</i> ; <i>Resources</i>) (I)
Stephanie Harvey & Anne Goudvis, <i>Comprehension Toolkit</i> (P, I)	WEBSITES
Ben Hillman, <i>How Big is It?</i> (I)	Sports Illustrated for Kids
Ben Hillman, <i>How Strong is It?</i> (I)	http://www.sikids.com/
Evan Moore Publishing, Nonfiction Reading Practice (reproducible units with articles at three different reading levels; available in various grade levels) (P, I)	CBC for Kids
Evan Moore Publishing, Read and Understand Science (reproducible articles for content area reading practice; available in various grade levels) (P, I)	http://www.cbc.ca/kids/
Cormac O’Brian, <i>The Daily Disaster: Real Life Stories of 30 Amazing Disasters</i> (I)	National Geographic for Kids
School Specialty Publishing, Extreme Readers series (P)	http://www.nationalgeographic.com/kids/
Louise & Richard Silsbury, World of Plants series (includes <i>Why Do Plants Have Flowers?</i> ; <i>Where Do Plants Grow?</i>) (P)	Time Magazine for Kids
Diane Swanson, <i>Up Close: Tails That Talk and Fly</i> (also <i>Up Close: Noses That Blow and Poke</i>) (P)	http://timeforkids.org
Diane Swanson, <i>Animals Eat the Weirdest Things; Animals Can Be So Speedy; Animals Can Be So Sleepy</i> (P)	What in the World?: Current events for Canadian schools
	http://www.lesplan.com/main.php
	http://www.readinga-z.com
	http://www.readingquest.org
	http://www.readwritethink.org
	http://www.readinglady.org

Scaffolded Lessons for Determining Importance

Lesson 1 (Teacher Directed): THIEVES

This strategy, adapted from the work of S.L. Manz (2002), has been developed for previewing textbooks. I have used it with intermediate students to help them “set the stage” for reading a new chapter in a textbook or for previewing an article or selected portion of a text. It works well for certain types of texts, but not for all.

- Begin the lesson:

We’ve been talking about determining importance and trying to find the main idea of a piece of text. Sometimes there is a lot of information on a page and not all of it is important. But there are certain places in texts that often have the most important information. If you know where to look for the information, it might

Titles
Headings
Introduction
Every first sentence
Visuals
Ending
So what?

help you when you are trying to figure out what information is important. This strategy is called THIEVES—T-H-I-E-V-E-S. I want to spend a little bit of time talking about thieves and what they do. Let's think about thieves who break into a house. Why are they there? (to steal things) Right—they enter the home to steal things. Now let's think about how they go about doing that. Do you think they stand in the hallway and consider where they should look first? Most thieves know what it is they want to steal and, more importantly, where they are going to find it. Where might a thief go to find the “goods” they want to steal? (bedroom, office, living room)

Well today we're going to learn how to be THIEVES when we read. Just like a good thief, a good reader knows where to go in the text to find the “good stuff.”

- Proceed through the acronym for THIEVES and explain what each letter stands for. It can be effective to have an overhead transparency of a page and use the strategy directly with a piece of text.

T — Title
H — Headings
I — Introduction
E — Every first sentence
V — Visuals
E — Ending
S — So What?

- Continue the lesson:

Having the students make their own THIEVES bookmarks to tuck into their copies of the textbook can be the helpful reminder they need as they read independently. Although it is easy to apply, I believe that had I learned this strategy when I was in high school, I would have saved a significant amount of money on highlighter pens in university.

The most important letter is the final letter—S—the “So what?” stage. So what do you think the most important ideas of this chapter (or article) are? Turn and talk to your elbow partner.

- End the lesson:

The THIEVES strategy is helpful for trying to determine what is important in a piece of informational text. It's also a way of helping you “get your mind ready” for the article. If you can figure out what the piece is about before you even start to read it, then it makes the reading that much easier. And often you will find that, after reading the main body of the text, you have already found the most important information that you need to know, because you know how to be a THIEF!

Lesson 1 Alternative for Primary Students (Teacher Directed): Take a PEEK

For this lesson you will need

- a beginner nonfiction book (a Big Book would work well for this lesson)

For primary students, a simplified version of the THIEVES strategy can be used when students are previewing simple nonfiction leveled books. This strategy can be used before the students begin to read as a way of setting the stage for reading and for figuring out what the text is about. It is a quick previewing strategy that can be done orally with partners.

- Begin the lesson:

Information books are full of lots of information.

(Hold up book showing a two-page spread)

Sometimes when I look at a page from a nonfiction book, like this one, there is so much information all over the page that I don't know where to start! Sometimes it helps, before I start to read everything, to take a PEEK at what's here so that I can figure out, before I start to read, what things on this page might be important. This quick little activity is called "Take a PEEK." It is a way of just helping me prepare for reading the page.

- Write the word *PEEK* vertically on the board or chart paper.

Pictures
Each heading
Ending
Know

The letter *P* stands for Pictures. Before I read the page, I'm going to look at all the pictures. Looking at the pictures helps to get my brain focused on what the page is about and things that might be important.

The first letter *E* stands for Every Heading. We know that information on a page is sometimes organized into sections. Reading the titles and headings on the page helps get my brain focused on the information.

The second letter *E* stands for Ending. Sometimes the end of a book or a chapter retells important facts. Reading the ending first can help to focus my brain on what information might be important.

The last letter, *K*, stands for Know. What do I know about this book (page)? What is this book (page) about? Now remember, we haven't read it all yet, but sometimes if we can think about what we know from our little "peek," then it helps us focus our brains on what is important.

P — Pictures E — Each heading E — Ending K — Know now? (What do I now know that might be important in this book?)
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- Continue the lesson:

Now let's try to "Take a PEEK" with this book. Who can remember what *P* stands for? Right—so I'm going to look at all the pictures and think about what I see.

(Discuss the photos.)

Who can remember what *E* stands for? Right—now I'm going to read all the headings on the page.

Now I'm going to look at the ending to see if there is important information here.

Now I'm going to ask myself what I now know about this book. Remember, I haven't read it all yet, but I've taken a peek.

Turn to your partner and tell them what you now know.

- Model what you know about the page.
- End the lesson:

"Take a PEEK" is something that readers can do before they start to read an information book. It only takes a few minutes, but it is a good way of focusing our

brains on what we are going to read and helps us to figure out what information is important.

- Independent Practice: Students can choose their own books and practice “Take a PEEK” independently or with partners.

Lesson 2 (Teacher Directed/Guided Practice): Turning It into a Question

For this lesson you will need

- overhead transparency of a nonfiction text for modeling: e.g., *Whales and Dolphins* by Caroline Bingham

This simple, effective strategy takes no prep but works well to help guide readers into locating important key pieces of text. It takes the simple principal of turning each title and heading into a question and then reading to find the answer. Often the title or heading will point readers in the right direction.

- Begin the lesson:

Look for a page that includes a title and several headings or subheadings.

Today I’m going to show you a quick strategy that can help you locate the main idea from a piece of text. It combines two strategies we have already learned—Zooming-In on text features and asking Questions. As we have learned, information on a page is often organized into sections with headings.

(Point to headings on transparency)

As you can see here, this article has a title and several headings. We are going to use these headings to help focus our reading and to determine the main points of this article.

First, I’m going to copy the title onto this chart. The title of this article is *A Mammal, Not a Fish*.

(Copy into *Heading* column)

Now in this column I’m going to turn that heading into a question. What question could I write?

- Model turning the heading into a question and record it in the *Question* column (see example on page 94).
- Record the second heading.
- Invite the students to participate by sharing a possible question with a partner.
- Invite students to provide the questions and record them on the chart. Continue guiding and modeling.
- Continue the lesson:

Now I’m going to read this article to try to find the answers to these questions. I’ll use these questions to guide me to determining the main ideas of this article. The first question I have written here is “What is a mammal?” I’m going to read this section to try to find the answer to this question.

- Read aloud the section and model answering and recording on the chart.
- Continue to read each section, reminding students that they are reading to try to answer the question.
- After modeling one or two examples, invite the students to participate to complete the chart.

- End the lesson:

Using the headings to help guide our reading is a way for us to find the important information in a text. Turning those headings into questions and answering the questions helps us focus on the important facts rather than the details.

Sample on *Whales and Dolphins* by Caroline Bingham, pages 4–5.

Title or Heading	Turn it Into a Question	Read to answer the question
A Mammal, Not a Fish	What is a mammal?	- <i>warm blooded</i>
	Why are they not fish?	- <i>lungs not gills</i>
		- <i>come to surface to breathe</i>
Breathe In	How do mammals breathe?	- <i>draw air through blowhole not mouth</i>
Blubber for Warmth	How does blubber keep them warm?	
Helping Hair	How does hair help?	

For this lesson each student will need:

- a nonfiction book
- Turn It Into a Question sheet (page 102)

Lesson 3 (Independent Practice): Turn It into a Question!

- Begin the lesson: Students may work individually or in pairs.
- Have students choose their own nonfiction book.
- Have them search for a page or two-page spread that has several headings and titles.
- Students record headings, form questions, and read to answer.

Lesson 4 (Teacher Directed): Introducing Nonfiction Text Structures

For this lesson you will need

- chart paper or SMART board for modeling

As with everything I teach, I believe that awareness of the concept is the key to understanding and application. This lesson introduces students to the concept of text structure and the five different structures most commonly used in informational texts.

- Begin the lesson:

We are learning different ways to determine what is most important in a piece of informational text. Today we are going to take a look at text structure, or the way a piece of text is designed. Knowing how text is designed or structured can help you figure out what is most important.

Text structure is the way an author organizes and puts together ideas. Every piece of text has a structure to it, or an “architectural design.” Does anyone know what an architect does? (designs buildings) Let’s compare an architect to an author for a moment. Let’s say that an architect is designing a house. A house has a basic structure to it—a roof, walls, doors, windows. Each house may look different, but inside the structure is the same. So an architect begins with the basic structure of a house and then adds details to make the house unique. If an architect is designing a skyscraper, the structure will be very different from that of a house—more floors, more windows, elevators, stairways. Again, the architect begins with the basic structure and then adds the details. A writer does something very similar, but instead of designing buildings like an architect does, a writer

designs text. Let's say a writer was going to write a story. A story has its own structure or framework—setting, characters, plot; problem, solution. The writer begins with this structure for writing a story, then adds details to make the story unique. If a writer is going to write an informational piece about penguins, he or she would use a different structure from that used for writing a story. The writer would begin with the basic structure for describing something, and then add specific details about the penguin.

Everything we read has a structure to it. There are different structures for different types of texts. Knowing what the structure is can really help you understand the text better.

Fiction writing, or stories, have only one structure: setting, characters, plot; problem, solution. All stories have the same structure, and the added details make each story different. Nonfiction, or writing that is true or presents information, has several different text structures. Knowing the different nonfiction text structures can help you become a better reader and can also help you when you are writing.

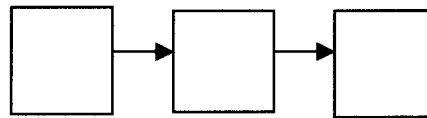
The first text structure is called *Description*. This is one of the most common text structures for the nonfiction that we read in school. This structure organizes facts that describe specific places, persons, things, or events. If you are reading a book about birds, about a dinosaur, a planet, a country—these would all be descriptive. Descriptive text structure, or the architectural design that we sometimes use for description, is a *web*.

(Draw a web on the chart paper or SMART board.)

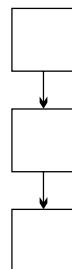
The topic is in the middle, and circles around it contain the details about the topic. If you are reading a description, it's easy to figure out the main ideas by using a web like this and filling in the important ideas.

The second text structure is called *Sequential* structure. This is a common nonfiction text structure for anything that is written in steps or in order of appearance; for example, if you are reading about an event in history, the instructions to a game, a recipe, or something that appears in order, like planets in the solar system. The visual that can help us read sequential texts looks like this.

(Draw on chart paper or SMART board.)



Or sometimes, the boxes might be going up and down like this.



If you are reading anything that outlines something in order, you can put each event into one of these boxes and it will help you figure out the main idea of the text.

- Continue the lesson: Introduce the different text structures: Compare and Contrast, Cause and Effect, Problem/Solution. Draw the visual framework for each (see Text Structure Grid on pages 103–104).
- End the lesson:

Today we've been learning about text structures, the frame that a writer uses to organize ideas, just like the frame an architect uses to design a house. How can knowing the text structure help you with your understanding? (helps you locate important information; helps with note-taking; helps organize your thinking)

- Extend the lesson: After the students have been introduced to text structures, it is important that they be given opportunities to practice determining the text structure of different pieces of text. This could be done very simply in the form of a game:

NAME THAT TEXT STRUCTURE

- Read or display different articles or texts; making overhead transparencies works well. Give students one minute to either read or listen while you read. The first person to correctly determine the text structure wins a point for his/her team or row.
- Another extension would be to model and guide the students how to use the specific visual to record the main ideas from the text, once the text structure has been determined; this helps to structure note-taking. These visuals can also be used for planning a piece of writing.

For this lesson you will need:

- overhead transparency of a one-page article or nonfiction piece (see sample "At the Front of the Cave" on page 105)
- sticky notes to cover up portions of the text

Students will need

- paper for writing a list of key words
- form for Key Words 1 (page 106) or Key Words 2 (page 107)

Lesson 5 (Teacher Directed/Guided Practice): Key Words

This strategy, adapted from Jan Wells and Janine Reid (2004: 64–65) offers a strategy for students to learn to select "key words" from a piece of text, and use them to summarize the main idea.

- Begin the lesson:

We've been working on ways that readers can locate and find the main idea in a nonfiction text. Today we're going to be learning about key words. A key word is a word that contains an important idea from the text. In any piece of text, there are

many words; some words are important and some are less important. Finding important key words can really help us separate what is important from the details that may not be as important.

- Project overhead transparency article “At the Front of the Cave” (or any other single-page article), using sticky notes to cover the entire text except for the title.
- Show title and ask students to select one word, from the six words in the title, that they think is the key word in the title.
- Students share their choice with a partner and explain why they chose the word.
- Remove the sticky notes from the headings, keeping the rest of the article covered.
- Ask the students to talk to a partner about what they think the article will be about. Have some students share out their ideas.
- Repeat the process by removing the sticky notes from visuals, photos, and captions while keeping the main body of the text covered. Students discuss in partners their growing knowledge about what the piece is probably about.
- Decide as a group what the article is most likely going to be about (i.e., rock hyraxes). Ask students to write the topic on the top of their paper. Explain that they will be making a list of key words about the topic.
- Remove the sticky notes from the first paragraph or chunk of text and ask students to read the exposed text carefully. You may also read it aloud.
- Ask students to select three key words they think are the most important words. Have them write those words in a list under the topic on their paper.
- Students share and compare their list with a partner, discussing their choices and the reason for them.
- After the students share, share your own choices with them.
- Continue the lesson:

Can anyone tell me how you made your choices? What helped you decide on your key words?

- As you guide them to articulate how best to look for a key word, write the points on chart paper to create an anchor chart on key words.

The Search for Key Words

Look for...

- Words connected to the topic
- Words that are repeated in the title, headings, or text
- Words that help you visualize
- One word that helps you remember an important idea

- Continue the lesson: Remove sticky notes from each paragraph or chunk, then have students add key words to their list (usually two words per paragraph, but this will vary depending on the length of text).
- Students share and compare their lists, removing or changing words as they go.

For this lesson I purposely choose three words *not* connected to the text or topic. I justify my choices and then have the students tell me why they think that they were not appropriate choices. By “playing dumb” and having the students tell me how to locate key words, they will take more ownership of the strategy. Had I begun the lesson telling them how to find key words, it would not have been as effective.

- End the lesson: Once the list is finalized, have students copy the words from their lists onto a Key Words form. Using the words on their list, students write a short summary on their Key Words form. A labeled picture can also be included.
- Extend the lesson: Using the next lesson, Sum It Up, as a follow-up helps students learn to summarize more effectively.

In this sample, the Grade 3 student has used all key words, but needs support in combining sentences. Using two key words in one sentence helps create a more fluent paragraph and eliminates choppy “robot talk.”



This student's summary ended up longer than the text itself—not an uncommon occurrence, as students often insert information from their background knowledge in their summary. Using a strategy such as Sum It Up (page 99) helps cut down on the extra information.



Lesson 6 (Teacher Directed): Sum It Up

For this lesson you will need

- the list of Key Words from Lesson 5: Key Words (page 96)
- chart paper or SMART board to model

Writing a summary can be challenging for many of us. It's hard to know how much information to include and how much to leave out. Students often have difficulty writing a summary, as their background knowledge tends to filter its way through—this results in a *War and Peace* version of the text, rather than the *Coles Notes* version. I discovered through ReadingQuest.org this fun, engaging strategy that ties the concept of spending money to writing a summary. Students also learn how to combine several key ideas into one sentence.

- Begin the lesson:

We've been looking at ways of locating important information in texts. It's important that you also know how to present that information in a few short sentences. When you take a lot of information and condense it into something smaller, it's called summarizing. The smaller condensed version is called a summary. A good summary includes only the important information from a text and leaves out a lot of the details. Today, I'm going to show you a fun way to write a summary using a strategy called Sum It Up. The "Sum" stands for summary, but it also stands for adding.

Here is a list of key words that I chose from the piece we read yesterday.

<i>Rock Hyraxes</i>	
<i>cave</i>	<i>sun-seeker</i>
<i>shelter</i>	<i>herbivore</i>
<i>enemies</i>	<i>family</i>
<i>mammals</i>	<i>weather</i>

Using these key words, I'm going to write a summary. But there's a trick to this: each word is worth ten cents. The challenge is to try to write a summary paragraph for \$2.00 or less, using all the words on my list. Apart from the topic—Rock Hyraxes—I have eight words on my list, which means that all together, they are worth 80 cents. I have \$1.20 beyond that to spend, so I had better be very careful in choosing other words. Oh—and since I'm feeling generous today, the topic word is FREE! So I don't need to count the words "rock hyrax" when they appear together. When you play Sum It Up, you also need to think about combining a lot of your key words into one or two sentences.

- Model with your list how several words can be linked together into one sentence.

So here's my start:

Rock hyraxes are small mammals that use caves as shelter from weather and enemies.

So far, I have written 14 words, and two don't count, so I've spent \$1.20. That means I have 80 more cents to spend—or eight more words to write. Since I've used four words from my list, four of the remaining eight words need to be words from my list. I still have some important information that I need to include, so I'll need to add another sentence. I may need to rework this first sentence after I write the other one.

Now see what you can do with your list.

- Allow students time to write their summaries.
- Students share with a partner, helping each other if they have “spent” too much.
- Invite some students to read their summaries aloud.
- End the lesson:

Today we learned an easy way to write a summary paragraph. It's not always going to be easy to summarize for \$2.00 or less, but it's something to keep in mind when you are asked to write the main ideas from a piece of text. Summaries should include the most important ideas and not have a lot of extra details added.

Lesson 7 (Teacher Directed/Guided Practice): Listen, Sketch, Label, Summarize

Although visualizing is not a specific strategy I focus on for nonfiction reading, because of the many visuals included in most nonfiction texts, it is a strategy that can be extremely effective for determining importance. Creating mental images of key ideas helps visual learners to filter out details and remember the important points. This strategy, adapted from the work of Faye Brownlie, has been proven most effective in many classrooms.

- Begin the lesson:

Sometimes, when I'm reading nonfiction, I find that visualizing while I read helps me to remember what's important. Details are often hard to visualize, so visualizing really helps readers to leave out details and focus on the main points. Today we're going to be practicing the strategy of visualizing.

- Read aloud the article from beginning to end and ask students to try to visualize, or create mental images, while they listen.
- Read through the article a second time, pausing between paragraphs or chunks of text to allow students to record a quick sketch that will help them remember that part of the text.
- Ask students to label their sketch with a few key words (not sentences).
- Continue to read the article, pausing between paragraphs for students to add to their sketch.
- Students get together with a partner and “point and talk” through their sketches, retelling what they remember from the article.
- Students use their sketches and key words to write on the bottom of their worksheets a summary of the important points (Using the Sum It Up lesson works well here. See page 99.)
- End the lesson:

For this lesson you will need

- a one-page nonfiction article for reading aloud, appropriate to grade level

Students will need

- Listen, Sketch, Label, Summarize (page 108) or Draw It/Recall It! (page 109)

Often, I will collect the sketches and continue the lesson the next day. It is amazing how much of the article the students remember from their sketches, even after a day has passed—evidence that the visual memory is a powerful one.

How many of you noticed that visualizing helped you sort out the main idea from all the details? Making mental pictures of information is a great way of remembering what's important. I sometimes keep sketch paper beside me when I am reading information. Sketching the key ideas helps me understand what I'm reading and also helps me better remember it.

Text used for this lesson came from "The Case Against Soda" in *Comprehension Toolkit* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (2005: 100).

Name: _____

FIRST ON YOUR OWN: Listen, Sketch, Label
 THEN WITH A PARTNER: Show and Tell
 FINALLY: Write

Topic: Soda pop

Drinking lots of pop makes you fat and gives you cavities. The fizz shrinks your bones. Only drink pop once or twice and that's OK. Also those machines are being destroyed.

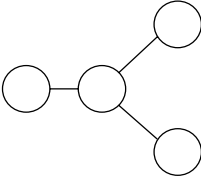
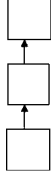
Turn It into a Question

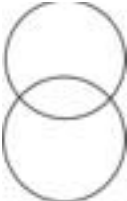
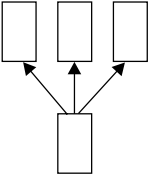
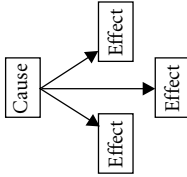
Name: _____ Date: _____

Title of Book: _____ Author: _____

Title or Heading	Turn It into a Question	Read to Answer the Question

Text Structure Grid

Text Structure	What Is It?	Visual	Questions to Ask	Signal Words	Examples
Descriptive	Organizes facts that describe specific places, persons, things; facts being described are not time or order specific		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is being described? • What are the most important characteristics or attributes of the thing being described? • What does it look like (act like, smell like, feel like, sound like)? • Why is the description important? 	Action words (<i>explode, unfold, nibbles</i>) Linking verbs (<i>is, are, belong to</i>) Present tense (<i>are, exit, grow</i>) Factual descriptions, not imaginative language	Report on animal, insect, habitat, clouds, a country, a planet, etc.
Sequential or Chronological	Organizes events in order of their appearance; events are time and/or sequentially specific.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What sequence of events is described? • What happened first, next, etc.? • What are the main incidents? • How is the pattern revealed? 	<i>before</i> <i>during</i> <i>after</i> <i>finally</i> <i>immediately</i> <i>initially</i> <i>following</i> <i>as soon as</i> <i>later</i> <i>next</i> <i>meanwhile</i> <i>now</i> <i>soon</i> <i>then</i> <i>until</i> <i>today</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the sequence of events in history • Recount the order of events in a newspaper report • Instructions on how to do or make something • Recount key events in a person's life (biography) • Describe life cycle of a plant or animal

Text Structure Grid, continued					
Compare and Contrast	Organizes information according to similarities and differences.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is being compared? • How are they alike? • How are they different? • What conclusion is drawn? • How is the pattern shown? 	<p><i>although both but in common as well as compared to either as opposed to still yet</i></p>	<p>Compare similarities and differences between</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two or more countries • two or more habitats • two or more animals or insects • two or more religions
Problem and Solution	Provides information about a problem and suggests alternatives for solution.		<p>What is the problem?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has caused this problem? • What are the possible ways to solve the problem? 	<p><i>A problem is A solution is The problem is solved by propose conclude The evidence is The reason for One reason is The issues are</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem: litter on the school ground • Problem: my friend is leaving me out at recess • Problem : inevitable shortage of water on the planet • Problem: global warming
Cause and Effect	Tells how one or more event(s) causes another event(s) to follow as a result.		<p>What is the event being described?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors contributed to this event? • What are the consequences or effects which may result from this? 	<p><i>as a result because This led to nevertheless If... then so that thus accordingly so consequently</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects of poor eating habits on health • Effects of pollution and gas emission on global warming • Effects of the pine beetle on wildlife and industry

At the Front of the Cave

Rock Hyraxes

The entrance of the cave is one place where animals seek shelter from their enemies and the weather. The **rock hyraxes** of Africa, Arabia and Asia use caves or crevasses in rocks and boulders as places to hide.

Hyraxes are mammals that look like furry guinea pigs, only slightly larger. Because hyraxes are defenceless creatures, they depend on the safety of their shelter for survival.

Families of rock hyraxes sun themselves for several hours in the morning before beginning their search for food. They eat mainly berries and plants, and can go for long periods of time without water.

Eagles, large cats and pythons are among the enemies of the rock hyrax. Whenever danger is near, rock hyraxes will escape into caves for safety.

Adapted from **Cave Dwellers** (2004: 5–6)



Rock hyraxes use crevasses in rocks and boulders as places to hide from enemies.



Rock hyraxes spend a lot of time lying in the sun.

Key Words 1

Name: _____ Date: _____

Key Words 2

Name: _____ Date: _____

Topic: _____

Section #1	Section #2	Section #3

Summary:

Listen, Sketch, Label, Summarize

Name: _____ Date: _____

- FIRST, ON YOUR OWN:** Listen, Sketch, Label
- THEN, WITH A PARTNER:** Point and Talk
- FINALLY, ON YOUR OWN:** Write

Topic: _____

Draw It/Recall It!

Name: _____ Date: _____

Text: _____

Draw an image that represents a main idea from your reading.

Write three facts about the main idea you have drawn.

	<p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p>
	<p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p>
	<p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p>
	<p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p>

Adapted from *Moving Up With Literacy Place* (2008:102)